and financial difficulties of the prospective buyers. The Government is seized of the position and is exploring various options.

Global Trade Powers Dragging India to dispute Settlement body of *W* T O

2193. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the present Government have overlooked "risks of international isolation in global trade arena" as reported in an article published in the Times of India, New Delhi, dated 20th July, 1997;

(b) whether global trade powers are trying to drag India to the dispute settlement body of the World Trade Organisation (WTO);

(c) if so, the reasons therefor indicating why India wants to continue to maintain Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) and slowe down the autonomous trade liberalisation process which began in 1991; and

(d) concrete steps taken so far by Government to avoid loss of India's export markets "abroad", "credibility' and "isolation" in global trade?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) No. Sir.

(b) to (d) The news item referred to in the question mainly deals with the consultations held in the Committee on Balance of Payments Restrictions of the World Trae Organisation (WTO) with India on the quantitative restriction on imports maintained by India under the provisions of Article XVIII : B of the General Agreement on Traffic and Trade (GATT), 1994. The news item mentions that India risked isolation in the global trade arena by refusing to notify an internationally acceptable time frame for eliminating barriers, and that the collapse of the talks has prompted global trade powers, including the EU, the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Switzerland to initiate dispute settlement proceedings against India.

Government of India had presented to the WTO Committee on Balance of Payments Restrictions a plan for the elimination of residual quantitative restrictions on imports maintained under Article XVIII:B of the GATT. This plan was discussed at the meeting of the Committee held on 10—11 June 1997 and at the resumed meeting held on 30 June-1 July 1997, when due to divergence of opinion among Members of the Committee, the consultations concluded without consensus. Therefore, it may not correct to state that India was isolated during the deliberations of this Committee.

Some of the Members that had expressed the view that the time period under India's plan was too long, namely, Australia, Canada, the European Communities, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United State of America, in separate requests, have sought formal consultations with India under Article XXII of GATT 1994 and the Understanding in Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes (DSU) alleging that continued maintenance of quantitative restrictions on imports for balance of payments purposes by India when there have been improvements in India's balance of payments is inconsistent with India's obligations under the WTO. India has accepted the requests for consultations. There are indications that the complainants would like to work towards a mutually acceptable solution. India's approach to these consultations would also be similar.

Import of tocee uder OGL

2194. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to place coffee under Open General Licence import scheme;

(b) if so, reasons for increase in domestic coffee prices; and